The Sunday Tribune's News and Reviews of Books and Authors

"The Unlit Lamp"

By Isabel Paterson

THE UNLIT LAMP. By Elizabeth Sanxay Holding. E. P. Dutton & Co.

IN A STORY completely ironic, the crowning touch of irony is the selection of a title and motto for it from Browning, the poet of incorrigible optimism. Half a dozen quotations offer themselves as more obviously apt; but this is perversely so, being neatly wrenched from its text and turned against itself. The obvious is not for Mrs. Holding. Try your own suggestion; you will find it must be amplified, carried further, to cover the case.

For instance, the reflection of George Ponderevo, in "Tono Bungay," may seem at a glance sufficiently disillusioned: "I began with the idea that life consisted in doing things; I learned that it consisted of having things done to me," Mrs. Holding takes the next step, over the brink of fatalism. Even so, she demonstrates with bitter clarity, the things done are of no effect. The subject of the experiment remains unalterably what he was.

Take the fatalistic view, then, the melancholy burden of Jude the Obscure: "Things are as they must be, and will come to their destined end.", She forces you to the conclusion that the end will be precisely the same as the beginning. And to Stevenson's: "We are all islands, shouting to each other across seas of misunderstanding," she subjoins that none of us is listening to the others cries.

Claudine Vincelle, Mrs. Holding's central figure, is poles apart from Browning's lawless, if procrastinating, lady of "The Statue and the Bust." All her desires were of an invincible propriety; and she acted on them to the best of her ability. Decorum was really her ruling passion, and she maintained it. The only man she ever inclined to she married, in spite of her mother's intelligent opposition. When afterward she wearied of her prison home, she did not content herself with looking out of the window. She ran away. True, she came back again, immediately; but that was because no welcome awaited her from any knight in the square below.

She disappointed her husband as much as he did her. Every character in the story, indeed, is a "frustrate ghost," and yet every one was obstinate in taking his or her own way. Nothing restrained them from doing precisely as they pleased; their trouble was that after it was done it did not please them.

Turning from her husband, Claudine concentrated her hopes and affections on her children. She would live through them. It did not occur to her that they would want to live for themselves. When her daughter, Andree, did just what Claudine had done, married a man her mother disapproved of, Claudine was amazed as well as heartbroken. And when Andree in turn found married life irksome, Claudine was still surprised, still determined to prevent her breaking free. Herself living apart, inaccessible, unchanged by all her experiences, she still believed she could affect others, direct them in the way of a happiness she had never found.

Within every human being, Mrs. Holding seems to say, is that inflexible core of egotism, which makes intimate contact with another not only impossible, but painful to attempt. If they love each other, so much the worse; they will only try harder and suffer more keenly. And this quietistic pessimism is so unbrokenly sustained throughout that it is a spiritual strain to read to the end; although in one sense no easier reading could be asked, owing to the author's lucid and graphic style. It is a style of wonderful hard, bright finish, a cold impeccability. It is as precise as Mrs. Wharton's, and more glacial; or, rather, it is quartz, not ice. It contains no possibility of thawing into pity.

If this is a problem novel, the problem is "What's the use?" and the answer appears to be: "It's no use. But you've got to go through with it just the same."

Problems, Mrs. Holding would seem to say, cannot be solved. They can only be outlived or ignored. You may fight or you may submit; it all comes to the same thing in the end. Therein lies the sting of the motto.

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Of course, like all writers of thesis novels, Mrs. Holding does not play quite fair. The defect is not intentional, however; it is not the chicane of the propagandist. It is that with all her wit—and she has a great deal—she is lacking in humor. Her people are too tense; they never relax and find ease in a good hearty laugh. She can give you a character in one masterstroke, for example, Claudine's husband: "Evening dress did not become his thick-set figure, but he was naturally not aware of that." Now, if he had ever become aware of it, there might have been some hope for him. But he never does. And Claudine herself is "assuaged," but she does not find one spark of amusement in her son-in-law's asking her for the secret of her power to let people alone, to accept them as they were, when in fact she had never accepted them as they were, and had just been reproaching herself for letting them alone. Yes, a humorless world would be quite as terrible as Mrs. Holding shows it. Only it isn't so. We are not, thank heaven, quite so refined as all that.

When one bears that in mind, the book becomes enjoyable. It is even tonic in its bitterness, since you not only won't but cannot believe it entirely. And the interiors alone, the evocation of the corseted gentilities and solemn, stuffy comforts of the past generation, are not only masterly as art, they are as quaintly interesting as an old album. They have the quality of a painting by Alfred Stevens. To be reminded of those horsehair horrors and wax-flower, glass-cased correctitudes is enough to make one applaud the flapper; and to have them alchemized into beauty is a double delight. Imagine making the Brooklyn of the '90s interesting. It is no mean feat.

The Lay Critic

VERSE. By Adelaide Crapsey, Alfred A. Knopf.

ADELAIDE CRAPSEY'S "Verse" leaves one with a bewildering sense of wavering between a world of blue gold and another of wind-blown shadows. It is a known biographical fact that Adelaide Crapsey died at thirty-five in exile at Saranac Lake, where her meager strength garnered these tantalizing bits of sheer beauty. I say tantalizing because of the innumerable paths of speculation this volume opens as to the possible permanent value of forthcoming works to the poetry movement. In this era of women poets Adelaide Crapsey's voice rises high and unfaltering.

At times she is exultant, rebellious, as in "To the Dead."

" . . . I will not submit
But with a spirit all unreconciled,
Flash an unquenched defiance to
the stars."

Again she is pensive, resigned to the baffling emptiness of her existence.

"So my faltering breath,
So my tired heart saith,
That foretell me death."

One feels always the shadow of the Shadow of Death in which Adelaide Crapsey sings her bird-clear crescendoes and her adagio diminuendoes. She is startlingly aware of death, of wraith folk, of the grim futility of this, our life. These to her are palpable and easily comprehended. She seems to belong to the other world and from her vantage point whisper to us of the things of our own world.

In the Cinquain, a new poetry form which she originated:

"Well and
If day on day
Follows, and weary year
On year . . . and ever days and
years. . . .
Well?"

In this new form, she has achieved an extraordinary compactness and extremely fastidious economy of expression. Economy, mind you, not paucity or leanness. Her heart soars above all accepted standards and technical barriers and culminates in an elemental perfection of a single crystal-cut impression. She does not maneuver her way to a desired point by a gymnastic juxtaposition of uncanny words or by wild straining for unusual metaphor. The poems seem swiftly and silently to assemble themselves upon the printed page without undue effort.

What a brave spirit indeed to sing this:

"Sun and wind and beat of sea,
Great lands stretching endless. . . .
Where be bonds to bind the free?
All the world was made for me!"

lying on her back and looking through the window frame at our world. Her indomitable spirit, consistently beautiful and tragic, has elevated these sudden flashes of a woman's vehement soul into fragile suggestions of magnificent conceptions that might have been.

Gliding swiftly and surely into the Shadow, she turns back every now and again, flings forth her hands in eager resistance, then smiles a fugitive smile, and wanders on.

One should give thanksoffering for the present volume, the only volume published of Adelaide Crapsey's works, chosen, arranged, and prepared by herself. It is to be regretted that one may not add that the advent of the author's next book shall be welcomed with much pleasurable anticipation.

JUDITH TRACTMAN.

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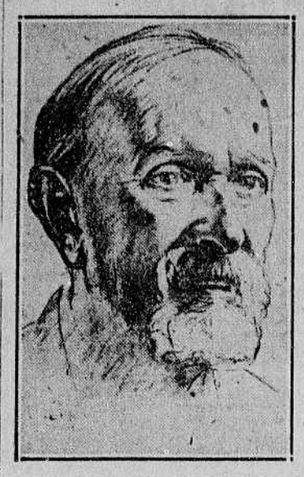

Carl Spitteler's "Two Little Misogynists," recognized already as one of the great classics of children, has been done into English and published by Henry Holt & Co.

Shop Talk

IRVING BROWN, athor of "Nights and Days on the Gypsy Trail," which is an authentic record of his friendship and wanderings with the Spanish gypsies, is a professor when he is not a Romany. He has just returned from another visit to his gypsy friends in Granada.

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Psychology is not solely an academic study with ROBERT CHENAULT GIVLER, author of "Psychology." He has psychologically investigated a big department store and given courses on the theme to the employees of a motor company and to life insurance salesmen to increase their efficiency. He also is a university professor, once of Harvard, now of Tufts College.

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REX BEACH, like Father William, in his youth was a law student, and gave it up because he found Blackstone deficient in humor, to say nothing of plot. He preferred George Ade. "My brothers," he says, "are real lawyers, orators, with eloquence to burn. The only eloquence I ever developed was when I drove a dog team."

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This month HILDA CONKLING will celebrate her twelfth birthday. Last month her second volume of poetry was published—"Shoes of the Wind."

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GEORGE INNESS HARTLEY, author of "The Importance of Bird Life," is a grandson of George Inness, the celebrated American landscape painter. Mr. Hartley's inherited love of nature turned in another direction, toward natural history, and he spent some time with WILLIAM BEEBE at the British Guiana Zoological Station.

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Besides being author of "The Problem of China," and a number of other serious studies of present day social aspects, BERTRAND RUSSELL is heir to an English earldom. He is also a socialist of sorts and was highly unpopular in his native land during the war for that reason.

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FRANCES R. STERRETT, author of "The Amazing Inheritance," spent the past summer in France. While there she observed that although a million or two English-speaking troops were quartered in France during a period of four years the French never picked up so much as an English phrase from them, generally speaking.

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The Hodder & Stoughton prize of $2,500 for the best Canadian novel was awarded to a first novel by a young Canadian, GORDON HILL GRAHAME, for a story of New France, a historical novel of old Quebec, giving a picture of the civil and ecclesiastical struggles of that province under the original French rule. Publication date has not been announced; it will probably be brought out in the United States by Harper's.

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Doubleday, Page quote TOM DALY as saying that CHRISTOPHER MORLEY "is no doubt an incarnation of Christopher Marlowe, the gay Elizabethan poet who has come back to earth to repair one or more errors of his previous sojourn." He has changed a good deal in the last few hundred years, though.

Making Einstein Easy

By Will Cuppy

RELATIVITY FOR ALL. By Herbert Dingle. Little, Brown & Co.
RELATIVITY AND THE UNIVERSE. By Dr. Harry Schmidt. Translated from the German by K. Wichmann. Robert M. McBride & Co.
EINSTEIN AND THE UNIVERSE. By Charles Nordmann. Translated from the French by Joseph McCabe. Henry Holt & Co.
EINSTEIN'S RELATIVITY. By D. J. McAdam. Richard G. Badger.

PLAIN people everywhere, are you content to remain any longer in the same old universe in which you were born and raised? Have you never yearned for something new in Newton, nor wept at the lack of sympathy and understanding in the theorems of Euclid? Don't you feel cramped in three dimensions? If you do, I can interest you.

How would you like to live in a nice hypothetical four-dimensional continuum, completely furnished with non-Euclidean abstractions, with modern improved gravitation on the reciprocally exclusive premises, pleasantly situated in a warp of the atmosphere where you could get plenty of fresh curved air?

I can see you there now, restfully rotating at a velocity of 186,000 miles a second upon a revolving disk, while the children romp with their domesticated tensors, scalars and orthogonal vectors and describe straight, bent geodetics in non-existant space with elastic measuring rods.

And by reference you need is a note from some one who owns syllogisms in the Einsteinian universe showing that you understand and believe in relativity, or at least pretend to do so. Now is the time to act, for there seems to be at present a concerted effort on the part of scientists to convert plain people to Alfred Einstein's principles. I have just read several books on relativity addressed particularly to "the plain man," and I see no reason why any of the volumes should be kept from plain women. I should hesitate to define a plain man, but the relativists apparently mean any person who is not a professor of higher mathematics, since they all make a point of explaining their subject without the use of mathematical formulæ.

This is done in kindness, but I think it is problematical whether relativity can be passed along either to the plain or to the fancy when deprived of its proofs, which inhere largely in Einstein's stupendous super-multiplications. It seems ungrateful to grumble over this when our authors only meant to spare our poor plain heads. But one can't help feeling that they have left out the plot as well as the headaches. Whenever verisimilitude demands some baffling but impressive mathematics, the professors gently advise us to never mind, or exclaim, "Oh, see the pretty hyper-cube!"

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I suppose we all ought to read up on relativity while the experts are in this mood. But those who prefer to do so can wait for the forthcoming "Calculus for the Kiddies," "Einstein for Halfwits," or Einstein's Morning Million for Morons" on phonograph records. Meanwhile, I advise them to try, anyway, to catch up with Copernicus.

The net result of my own reading is that I feel I might understand at least a part of the subject if I had time to read all the books all over again. I gather, however, in my plain blunt way, that we must give up, since relativity, practically everything we learned in Physics I. We have lost them all, including even such trifling but none the less prized belongings as space, time and matter. Rather, it is the physicists and not we who have lost all these things. Well, they got themselves into this mess.

What have we left? The Interval. Says one authority on present conditions in the stricken universe: "The sole reality accessible to man in the external world, the only really objective and impersonal thing which is comprehensible, is the Einsteinian Interval." But what is that?

At any rate the plain person can gather much delightful information from these books. One finds out how practical and how progressive are our physicists. While the medieval theologians debated how many angels could dance on the point of a needle our scientists have discovered that there are more than 15,000,000 molecules of iron in the head of a pin. Also, an individual electron is about a thousand billion times smaller than the smallest known atom and the size of the atomic nucleus is again about one thousand millionth part the size of a negative electron. How do they find these things out? The plain man doesn't know. He can only tap his forehead and smile.

This same plain man is likely to retort upon the relativists in several biting ways. He might well assert that the theory seems to apply only to people who move at a velocity of 186,000 miles a second and that he has no time for that, what with rotating daily with the earth and following his orbit around the sun in addition to his routine tasks. And that physicists seem to think that the only natural place for a thing to happen is in an artificially created vacuum or in an intellectual abstraction.

Really, just because the relativists are quick at figures, must we move into a universe that probably doesn't exist and would certainly collapse in the first warped breeze if it did. Just to take them down a bit one hopes that somebody will take a notion to relativize the multiplication table.

"For me," I feel like saying to Professor Einstein, "for me, as for Ruskin, the gentian is blue." (Although I don't recall ever seeing a gentian.)

"Ah," he would surely reply, "but just imagine an ichthyosaurus traveling at the velocity of the Beta rays of radium." And I can't.

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The means employed by our four expounders of simplified Einstein to reach the plain intelligence differ as widely as their nationalities. In his effort to impart the fact that according to the newer conceptions of physics, space, time, and matter are not absolute and independent, but relative to the observer, Mr. Dingle in "Relativity For All" mentions prominently Scylla and Charybdis, love God, and Professor A. N. Whitehead, and advances the pregnant thought that "truth is simple to the simple minded." In "Relativity and the Universe" by Dr. Harry Schmidt, the demonstrations are so ingenious, the summaries so concise, the chapters so well built and thorough that I feel I have only myself to blame if I do not quite get the idea.

Perhaps the most comforting thing in all these books is Professor Nordmann's suspicion that "Voltaire never quite understood Newton, though he wrote much about him, and Newton was less difficult to understand than Einstein is." One of my aunts remarked that perhaps Voltaire read simplified Newton. She said that she had perused a dozen Relativity primers in perfect darkness, but that when she tackled Einstein himself she found to her surprise that she understood him perfectly. My aunt is a clever woman, and I regard this as one of her cleverest lies. For they say that brains are coming in again, and Relativity will be much discussed this winter.

For myself, the more I learn about Relativity the less I know. A little Einstein is a dangerous thing, and a lot of Einstein is more so. Each new tome reopens the whole agonizing, ghastly, impossible gymnastic. These four books left my autonomic nervous system a complete blank. I achieved only that perfectly blank state of mind which my aunt mistook for Einsteinian omniscience.

"It really makes you think," said auntie. "For instance, isn't it funny that Newton's name was Isaac and Einstein's is Albert?"

The Countess de Chambrun, who was Miss Clara Longworth, sister of Nicholas Longworth, has written a novel, "Playing With Souls," which has just been published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

New Books Received

PEREGRINE'S PROGRESS. By Jeffery Farnol. Little, Brown & Co.
THE CHARM OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM. By James Reid Marsh. Little, Brown & Co.
THE FUN OF BEING A FAT MAN. By William Johnston. Little, Brown & Co.
ADVENTURES OF DIGGLEDY DAN. By Edwin P. Norwood. Little, Brown & Co.
CAROLINE AT COLLEGE. By Lela Horn Richards. Little, Brown & Co.
ELEMENTS OF LETTERING. By Frederic W. Goudy. Mitchell Tenneriy.
LETTERS OF HOWARD HORACE FURNESS. Houghton, Mifflin.
THE WIND BLOWETH. By Donn Byrne. Century Co.
THE MIDDLE OF THINGS. By J. S. Fletcher. Alfred A. Knopf.
THE WELL IN THE WOOD. By Bert Leston Taylor. Alfred A. Knopf.
MLLE. FIFI AND BOULE DE SUIF. By Guy de Maupassant. Alfred A. Knopf.
HASSAN. By James Elroy Flecker. Alfred A. Knopf.
FROZEN JUSTICE. By Ejnar Mikkelsen. Alfred A. Knopf.
THE MOTH DECIDES. By Edward Alden Jewell. Alfred A. Knopf.
GERMINIE LACERTEUX. By Edmond and J. de Goncourt. Alfred A. Knopf.
THE PROBLEM OF CHINA. By Bertrand Russell. Century Company.
SHOUTS AND MURMURS. By Alexander Woollcott. Century Company.
MR DICKENS GOES TO THE PLAY. By Alexander Woollcott. Putnam.
MY NORTHERN EXPOSURE. By Walter E. Traprock. Putnam.
THE PUSSYCAT PRINCESS. By Edward Anthony. Century Company.
KID KARTOONS. By Gene Carr. Century Company.
TWO SHALL BE BORN. By Marie Conway Oemler. Century Company.
THE MYSTERY OF NUMBER SIX. By Augusta Huell Seaman. Century Company.
THE IMPORTANCE OF BIRD LIFE. By G. Innes Hartley. Century Company.
PIRATES. By C. Lovat Fraser. McBride.
BILL THE BACHELOR. By Denis Mackail. Houghton, Mifflin.
MIHRIMA, AND OTHER POEMS. By Cale Young Rice. Century.
THE BOOK OF NOBLE DOGS. By Estelle Ross. Century Company.
THE GREEN OVERCOAT. By Hillaire Belloc. McBride.
DANIEL BOONE, WILDERNESS SCOUT. By Stewart Edward White.
MOONLIGHT SCHOOLS. By Cora Wilson Stewart. E. P. Dutton.
MAKING YOUR CAMERA PAY. By F. C. Davis. McBride.
JUST NERVES. By Austen Fox Riggs. Houghton Mifflin.
DUST OF DESIRE. By Margaret Peterson. McBride.
VANDERDECKEN. By H. de Vere Stacpoole. McBride.
REGINALD. By H. H. Munro. McBride.
THE FRUIT OF THE TREE. By Hamilton Fyfe. Thomas Seltzer.
WHAT PROHIBITION HAS DONE TO AMERICA. By Fabian Franklin. Harcourt, Brace.
TRUE STORY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. By Elbridge S. Brooks. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
TACKLING TECH. By Lawrence Wood. Consant. Ronald Press.
THE GENOA CONFERENCE. By J. Mills. E. P. Dutton.
THE TRAIL OF CONFLICT. By Loring. Penn Publishing Company.
ACROSS THE MESA. By Jarvis Penn Publishing Company.
THE PENITENT. By Edna Underwood. Houghton, Mifflin.
CHRISTMAS CAROLS. Edited by Walter. Macmillan.
THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF CHRISTMAS. Compiled by J. C. Dier. Macmillan.
DAVID IVES. By Arthur Stanwood Houghton, Mifflin.
THE DANCING FAKIR. By John Longman.
WINONA ON HER OWN. By Widdemer. Lippincott.
THE GLAND STEALERS. By Gayton. Lippincott.
GOLF. By Cecil Leitch. Lippincott.
THROUGH THE CLOUD MOUNTAIN. By Florence Scott Bernard. Lippincott.
THE COMING OF THE PEOPLES. By Rolt-Wheeler. Doran.
SEEING THE EASTERN STATES. By John T. Faris. Lippincott.
HOW TO PLAY THE PIANO. By Hambourg. Doran.
PUSS JUNIOR AND THE MAN IN THE MOON and PUSS JUNIOR AND ROBINSON CRUSOE. By David Cory. Harper & Bros.
SOME DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS. By Harvey O'Higgins. Harper & Bros.
NIGHTS AND DAYS ON THE GYPSY TRAIL. By Irving Brown. Harper & Bros.
GUILD SOCIALISM. By Niles Carpenter. D. Appleton & Co.
THE BOY SCOUT'S YEAR BOOK. D. Appleton & Co.
WILD EARTH. By Padraic Colum. Macmillan.
THE CUCKOO'S NEST. By Christine Jope Slade. Houghton-Mifflin.
THE REPUBLICS OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA. By C. Reginald Enock. Scribner.
BIG LAUREL. By Frederick Orin Bartlett. Houghton, Mifflin.
OLD CROW. By Alice Brown. Macmillan.
THE LOVE LEGEND. By Woodward Boyd. Scribner.
THREE ASSES IN BOLIVIA. By Lilian L. Portman. Houghton, Mifflin.
SOLARIO THE TAILOR. By William Bowen. Macmillan.
BIBLE STORIES IN BIBLE LANGUAGE. By Lorinda Munson Bryant. D. Appleton & Co.